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ABSTRACT

Between 1893 and 1920, the U.S. government attempted to transform Kiowa children by immersing them in the forced assimilation program that lay at the heart of that era's Indian policy. Committed to civilizing Indians according to Anglo-American standards of conduct, the Indian Service effected the government's vision of a new Indian race that would be White in every way except skin color. Reservation boarding schools represented an especially important component in that assimilationist campaign. The Rainy Mountain School, on the Kiowa-Comanche-Apache Reservation in western Oklahoma, provides an example of how theory and reality collided in a remote corner of the American West. Rainy Mountain's history reveals much about the form and function of the Indian policy and its consequences for the Kiowa children who attended the school. This book combines a survey of changing government policy with a discussion of response and accommodation by the Kiowa people. Unwilling to surrender their identity, Kiowas nonetheless accepted the adaptations required by the school and survived the attempt to change them into something they did not wish to become. Rainy Mountain became a focal point for Kiowa society. Ultimately, the school failed in its mission to destroy Kiowa identity and, yet, ironically succeeded by giving many young Kiowas the experiences and skills they needed to combine two worlds. Melding archival research with personal memoirs, conversations with former students, and the school's official records, this book portrays a school often at odds with the official policy of transformation and assimilation and frequently neglected by the Indian Service's bureaucracy. Contains references in endnotes, an extensive bibliography, photographs, maps, and an index. (TD)